



# EXPLORE THE PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES OF ENGLISH TEACHERS IN USING AUDIO VISUAL AIDS TO TEACH VOCABULARY

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## ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study was to explore the practices and challenges of English teachers in using Audio visual aids to teach vocabulary to primary, secondary and tertiary level of EFL Students. Mixed research design was employed to assess how teachers practice visual aids to teach vocabulary. In addition, students were interviewed to enrich data gathered through classroom observation and teachers' interview. After analyzing the data through quantitative and qualitative methods, the results indicated that many English teachers were not familiar with audio-visual aids while teaching vocabulary. It seemed that they were reluctant even in using the audio-visual aids from the student's textbook. The findings of the study showed that English language teachers do not give due attention towards employing audio-visual aids in teaching vocabulary to the EFL Students.

**KEYWORDS:** Audio- Visual Aid, Vocabulary, challenges , practice.

## 1.Introduction:

*"If language structures make up the skeleton of language, then it is vocabulary that provides the vital organs and the flesh."* (Harmer 1993: 153)

Recent trends in teacher education have focused on exploring the practices of English teachers' credence on teaching practices. Vocabulary teaching is one of the most important components of any language class. The main reason is the fact that it is a medium, which carries meaning; learning to understand and express the meaning in learning languages. There has been increased focus on teaching vocabulary recently, partly as a result of "the development of new approaches to language teaching, which are more 'word-centred'." (Thornbury 2004: vi). The art of the teacher is to create contexts in which the students' minds are focused on the meaning and use of language being taught and the language is experienced by the students as essential to their participation in the activity. Therefore, student's minds are focused on the meanings of new words if visual materials are included in vocabulary teaching. As Hill (1990) pointed out, "the standard classroom" is usually not a very suitable environment for learning languages. That is why teachers search for various aids and stimuli to improve this situation. Pictures are one of these valuable aids. They bring "images of reality into the unnatural world of the language classroom." Pictures bring not only images of reality, but can also function as a fun element in the class. Sometimes it is surprising, how pictures may change a lesson, even if only engaged in additional exercises to create the atmosphere. Pictures have been used for centuries to help students to understand various aspects of foreign languages. The pictures have motivated the students, made the subjects they are dealing with clearer, and illustrated the general idea and forms of an object or action which are particular to culture. Wright(1989), suggests that pictures have a major role to play in developing students' vocabulary skills.

In this study the main purpose was to explore the practices and challenges of English teachers in using Audio visual aids to teach vocabulary to primary, secondary and tertiary level of EFL Students in the classroom. Vocabulary teaching and learning constitute a major problem for EFL instructors and students. Teaching English in Saudi classroom tends to be traditional; that is, it is more teacher-centred rather than learner-centred, as teachers hold the position of power, seen as the knowledge interpreter and content transformer. Mixed research design was employed to assess how teachers practice audio-visual aids to teach vocabulary in Primary Secondary and Tertiary levels, KSA. Though the English curriculum proposes, the use of audio-visual aids for effective classroom instruction. Activities related to listening and speaking skills require audio-visual aids. It is the responsibility of the teacher to use audio-visual aids in teaching vocabulary to make the teaching-learning process effective.

Teachers of English both in elementary and secondary schools complain that they face problems in teaching English effectively in the existing practices of audio-visual aids in the text books. As to produce and to use it the schools are not equipped with the necessary materials, the teachers are over-loaded with teaching and are not well qualified and trained, the teachers are mostly unfamiliar with Audio-visual methods and where a highly verbal approach is characteristic in all forms of teaching. As a result, they do not have times to produce the necessary audio-visual aids which are found in the students' textbooks in the schools. Although Audio – visual aids are different types of tools that appeal to the sense of learning and vision and are used in classrooms for presentation of abstract information. However, a language teacher in an EFL classroom, experience challenging situations with the communicational activities, given in the prescribed

EFL textbooks. To solve these problems, various methodological approach is imperative. Good visual aids from the text will motivate the imagination and provide a clear idea for language practice.

**2. Audio visual aids and its Importance in Teaching Vocabulary:** Audio-visual aids, are useful aids and materials which help both learners and teachers in acquiring and teaching a language, in English as a foreign language. Allen (1983:33) defines Visual aids as follows: When students see actions performed by a classmate or two in response to the teacher's instructions that, is a kind of Visual aid. According to Kinder S. James: Audio visual aids are any device which can be used to make the learning experience more concrete, more realistic and more dynamic. Educationists believe that teachers should create an effective classroom learning which is related to real life situations. Doff (1988) states this, one of the easiest ways to elicit new vocabulary is by using pictures ,either in the students' text book or brought in especially. Before reading a text, the reader decides to use pictures to 'set the scene' and to introduce key vocabulary. This idea reveals two important points: pictures might be significant in eliciting new words which are found in the student's text books or brings in to the classroom by the teacher. Whereas, Rathenberg and Mielck have a quiet high perception. They compared teaching aids to language. In other words, they looked at language as an instrument which people use in order to communicate, and they consider also teaching materials as instruments that teachers use to communicate with learners "A teaching aid always serves to exchange information between teacher and students". The adaptation of audio-visuals should be directed by teachers to students' knowledge. They have represented this communication task diagrammatically as follows:

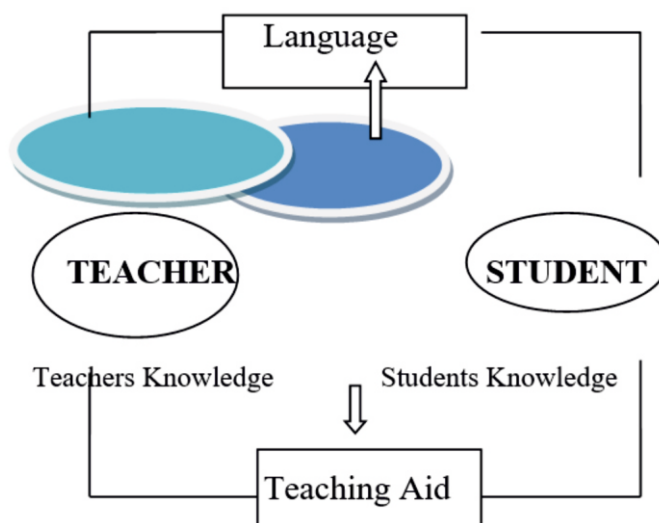


Fig 1.Rathenberg and Mielck's Fundamentals of Communication Theory

Other researchers from the Arabic world who highlighted the educational need and value of audio-visuals like Mohamed Abd el-Hafed "Introduction to Educa-

tional Technology”; Hamdi Hocine “Technological and Communicative Materials in Teaching”; Ali Abd el-Aziz “Educational Technology in improving Educational Attitudes”; and Ali Mohamed “Teaching aids and Educational Technology” are among Language Teaching Aid Teacher.

According to Whitbread (1996), pictures are important for stimulating discussions in the actual classrooms. For example, if a teacher considers that a certain topic is vague and unclear to the students, he/she may incorporate pictures and make students participate actively by talking about pictures given to them. This might be valuable for the student to discuss and stimulate (activate) their prior knowledge and bridge the gap that may face on the new topic. Therefore, pictures are very important in language classrooms especially in primary schools. Mathew & Alidmat (2013) conducted a study on the usefulness of audio-visual aids in ELT in Saudi Arabia. According to the authors, “Teaching and learning becomes monotonous when the language teachers are compelled to rely on the text books as the only source of language input” (p.88). In their study, they explored how the use of audio visual aids helps the language teacher in EFL classroom at undergraduate level. They found that the result of their study indicates that using audio-visual aids in language teaching is helpful for both the teachers and the students. Both the parties claimed that it makes the class interesting and effective (pp.89-90).

In this paper the practices and challenges of English teachers in using visual aids are identified to activate student's interest especially in learning vocabulary. Therefore this study might be important in providing awareness that audio-visual have significant role in language classes in arousing and activating interests of students in learning vocabulary.

**3. The study** is to explore English language teachers awareness and significance to use audio-visual aids to teach vocabulary in classroom and to identify the challenges that obstructs an effective use of textbooks in using audio visual aids to teach vocabulary.

**4. Methodology and Sample:** A mixed method approach was used as part of the descriptive survey method because of the complexity of using audio-visual aids to teach vocabulary skills in EFL classroom. Hence, both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to validate and explore the practices and challenges of English teachers in using Audio visual aids to teach vocabulary in the EFL classroom. The data gathering tools used was Classroom observation, questionnaire, Interview and Text book to acquire a through approach into the real practices concerning the objective of this study. The participant of this study was EFL students and majority teachers from Primary, secondary and Tertiary level from Al Qassim Region, KSA. Purposive sample technique was used in order to select representatives from the population of students and teachers. Twelve sample English teachers of Primary, secondary and Tertiary level were selected.

## 5. Results and Data Analysis

The data collected through the closed-ended questionnaire were analyzed quantitatively, whereas data through classroom observation and interview was analyzed using qualitative method.

**1. English Teacher's awareness and Beliefs on the significance of Audio-Visual Aids in Teaching Vocabulary:** The data collected revealed that almost all the teachers were aware of audio visual aid in vocabulary teaching, while 30% of the teachers were reluctant to use it in the classroom environment due to lack of competent knowledge, 25% were not so reluctant though being aware were ready to use and some used it too but needed guidance and skill to incorporate within the regular teaching hours. Whereas 45 % of the teachers were actually implementing it as the activities presented in the textbooks required the use of it and they even agreed.

Gopal V. P. (2010) stressed that audio-visual materials help the teacher to overcome physical difficulties of presenting subject matter. That is to say, with audio-visual materials, the barrier of communication and distance is broken. The culture and climatic conditions of other countries can be brought into the classroom with the aid of slides, films, filmstrips and projectors. This is important because, according to Dike (1993) “once the phenomenon is visualized, the picture and knowledge becomes very clear and permanent”. Table 1 data collected through questionnaire, below reveals the different views of English teachers on the significance of visual aids to teach vocabulary. Accordingly, 67% of the respondents strongly agreed on the importance of audio-visual aids in teaching vocabulary whereas there was no negative response or disagreement regarding the importance.

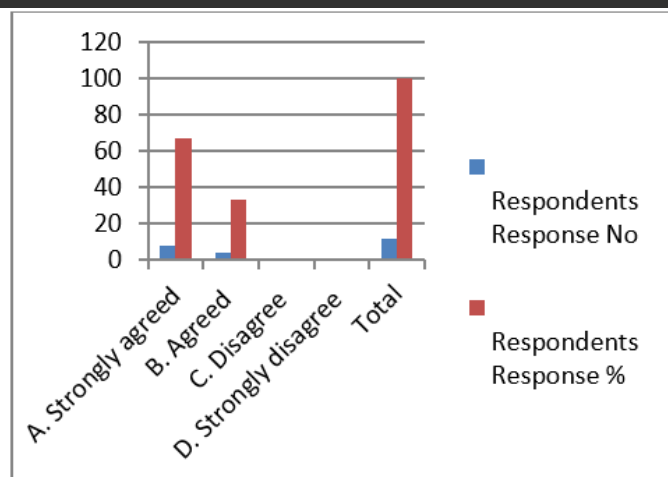


Table 1: Significance of Audio- Visual Aids to teach vocabulary

The data gathered via interview from English teachers revealed that they strongly agreed on the significance of audio-visual aids to teach vocabulary. For example, one respondent t-1 gave the following answer for the interview question: “Audio- Visual aids are important in teaching and learning vocabulary. Because they help students understand and remember the new word, its meaning and usage.” Hence by English teachers strongly agree, because students remember the word by correlating it with sounds, pictures, real objects, charts etc. The integration of audio-visual aids may increase learners' interest and motivation; and help them to memorize new words easily. Similarly, teachers also use three different stages while integrating the audio-visual

**materials:** pre-viewing, while-viewing, and post-viewing. In each one, teachers use appropriate activities concerning vocabulary. However, the data collected through observation indicated that English teachers were reluctant to use audio visual aids even though they had a strong belief of its importance, because of the real classroom environment, time constraint etc which was a major hurdle. In Saudi English classroom, teachers therefore depend heavily on the textbook as a medium for instruction, and the use of technology to enhance learning has not yet been profoundly exploited (Khan, 2011). This observation can be attributed to two factors; on one hand, Saudi teachers are in charge of teaching the English curricula within a specific period of time, which provides little opportunity to incorporate extra teaching aids, such as technology, particularly in light of their very busy schedule they have.

## 2. Frequency to Use Audio- Visual material to teach Vocabulary

Table 2, indicates that a good number of the teachers rarely use audio-visual resources in teaching. According to the table and the data collected, 51% of the teachers rarely use audio-visual materials, 26% of them don't use or have never used audio-visual materials; 23% often use audio-visual resources. Therefore, it is concluded that the teachers RARELY use audio-visual resources in teaching. The data gathered via interview from teachers showed that audio-visual aids are sometimes used to teach vocabulary in primary schools. However, the data

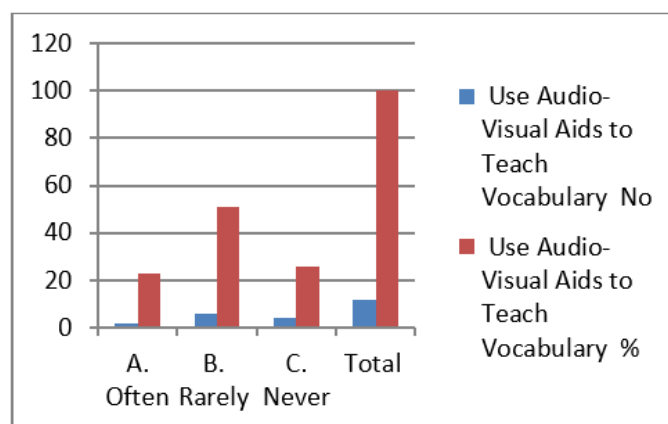


Table 2: Frequency to Use Audio-Visual aids to teach vocabulary

gathered through interview from the students showed that teachers could not use visual aids (like pictures, real objects, charts, flash cards, etc) to teach vocabulary. The students responded that teachers often write words on the blackboard or verbally ask to tell the meanings.. They hardly use audio visual aids to make the meanings clear and understandable even if the activities in the text book say so. The classroom observation, also revealed that teachers were totally using the same technique of vocabulary teaching, they often define new words and translated them into the mother tongue (L1) of the students i.e. Arabic. Therefore, it was

observed that teachers were reluctant to incorporate audio-visual aids in teaching vocabulary. Looking at the textbook of the different levels there are varieties of techniques in teaching and learning vocabulary. For example, defining words, contextual clues, pictures, charts, reading text are included.

### 3 Types of Audio-Visual aid used to teach vocabulary

The finding of the research indicates according to the data collected and analyzed from the responses obtained from teachers is clearly shown in Table 3 that chalkboard is the only Audio-Visual aid that is very often used.

**Table 3: Types of Audio- visual aids**

| No. | Items                    | V O | O  | Rarely | Nvr | X   | result |
|-----|--------------------------|-----|----|--------|-----|-----|--------|
| 1   | Posters                  | 30  | 26 | 36     | 6   | 2.8 | O      |
| 2   | Pictures/                | 36  | 20 | 34     | 12  | 2.7 | O      |
| 3   | Chalkboard               | 85  | 8  | 5      | -   | 3.8 | VO     |
| 4   | Recorders                | 9   | 16 | 16     | 57  | 1.8 | N      |
| 5   | Disc                     | -   | 8  | 10     | 80  | 1.3 | N      |
| 6   | Magnetic boards          | 4   | 1  | 22     | 71  | 1.4 | N      |
| 7   | Magazines                | 32  | 28 | 24     | 14  | 2.8 | O      |
| 8   | Maps                     | 45  | 20 | 18     | 15  | 3.0 | VO     |
| 9   | Models                   | 40  | 20 | 17     | 21  | 2.8 | O      |
| 10  | Flannel boards           | -   | 8  | 20     | 70  | 1.4 | N      |
| 11  | Television               | 2   | 6  | 16     | 74  | 1.3 | N      |
| 12  | Computer                 | 2   | 6  | 10     | 80  | 1.3 | N      |
| 13  | Slides                   | 8   | -  | 15     | 75  | 1.4 | N      |
| 14  | projectors               | 4   | 4  | 20     | 70  | 1.4 | N      |
| 15  | Mime, action and gesture | 4   | 4  | 20     | 70  | 1.4 | N      |

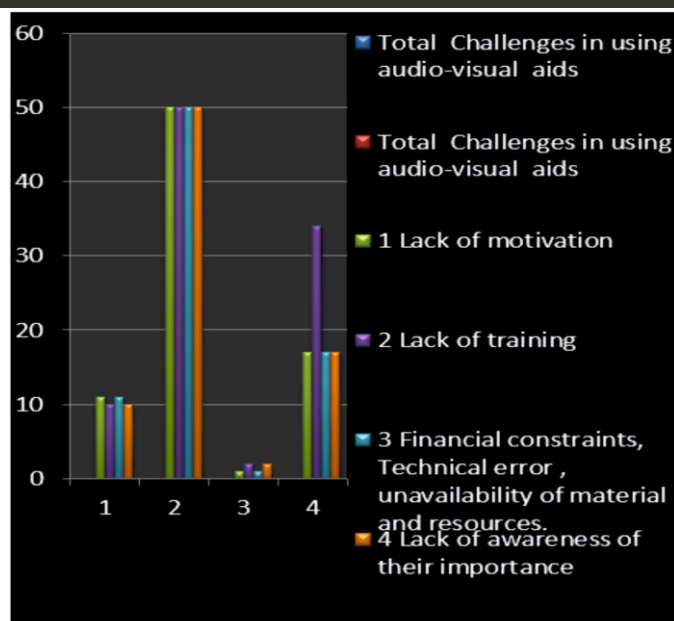
The use of pictures often facilitates students' effort to understand the meaning of words. Other aids like, pictures/photographs/newspapers cut out, maps, magazines are often used, other are used rarely or never which falls below the criteria mean of 2.8 indicating that Audio-Visual aids are not often used in teaching. It is not surprising because, chalkboard is the most fundamental teaching aid which no institution could afford not to use or have. Classroom observation was used to collect information about what was going on during the actual teaching-learning process, during the observation while teachers were using the student's textbook and explaining through body language to teach the meaning of certain words. The students were not active participant in comparison to when teachers used audio-visual aids. From the classroom observation it indicated that too rarely other aids were used, the widely used ones were Chalk board then pictures, photographs, models were considered for teaching vocabulary.

Therefore from the classroom observation, it has been seen that teachers rarely use audio-visual aids to teach vocabulary even if they know that visual materials facilitates vocabulary learning. Thus it needs teachers' zeal and dedication to use the various audio-visual aids to teach vocabulary. The student's textbook has various activities like pictures, photos, maps, recorded activities too that can be used for teaching vocabulary, it seems that was also not incorporated by the teachers irrespective of their awareness of its importance. Though teachers believed that using varieties of aids of teaching vocabulary are significant, they could not use them effectively in the classroom. According to Allen (1983:41), there are several ways to show meaning of an English word through visual aid.

### 4. Challenges in Using Audio-Visual Aids (AVA's) to teach Vocabulary

Many difficulties may challenge the proficient use of AVAs. These challenges can affect negatively the process of teaching and learning, and at times it ends with unsatisfied educational results. These problems can even occur at different level for example some educators and teachers can face constraints while planning the teaching aids (their availability, usefulness...etc.); whereas, others can face problems while presenting them (technical problems, etc.). According to Cakir (2006), The main disadvantages are cost, inconvenience, maintenance and some cases the fear of technology. Additionally, the sound and vision, quality of the copies or home-produced materials may not be ideal. Another important issue in this case is that the teacher should be well-trained on using and exploiting the video. Otherwise, it becomes boring and purposeless for the students (p.68).

Table 4 below indicates the difficulties in using audio-visual aids to teach vocabulary. All the items below indicates that the maximum number of respondents stated that the major difficulty is they lack motivation, training, awareness in using audio-visual aids to teach vocabulary, very few showed a reasonable level of understanding in terms of problem. These constraints are related to the teachers' poor knowledge of pedagogical aids and all what is associated with; they are responsible in whether decreasing or increasing the barriers. Dale argued that researchers and teachers who disagree with the use of audiovisual aids are not knowledgeable of using audio-visual materials, and even teaching it.



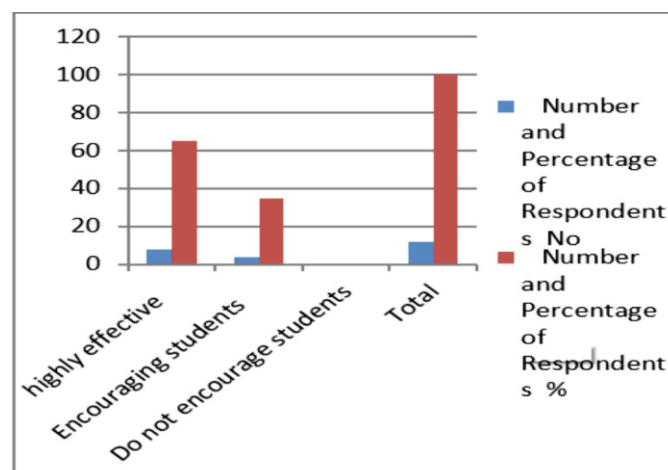
**Table 4: Difficulties in using audio-visual aids to teach vocabulary**

The data gathered through observation and interview stated that all the teachers agreed that they sometimes face some challenges while using audio-visual aids in their classes. The common one is the technical problems. One of the 14 teachers said, "I often face technological difficulty while using audio-visual aid in the class. The material saved in the flash gets corrupted while using with virus, and often the Computers do not support certain files which has to be shared with the students." The selection of the appropriate materials is very challenging. As the teachers don't have the facilities to design their own audio-visual materials suitable for the classes, they have to depend on the ready-made resources from different websites. As a result, it is very challenging for the teachers to find out suitable materials that match with the level of the learners with other criteria.

During observation, it was found that English teachers were not effective in using audio-visual aids to teach vocabulary. They exclusively constrained themselves to the textbook. It seemed that they were only trying to cover the activities in the textbook within the given time. They did not worry about providing visual aids for their students. The class seemed to be devoid of motivation. No motivation from both teachers and students was found. Preparing and using additional materials visual aids depends on interest and motivation. While observing the pedagogical centers, they seemed that they were not doing their work properly. For example, the teaching aids were not arranged properly. They were disorganized.

The teachers were not effectively using the pictures, charts, diagrams in the students textbook. The reason could be teachers might not be familiar with them or were not interested. Moreover, they could not give emphasis for these aids because of lack of experience and knowledge in using audio-visual aids. However, some of the teachers have faced difficulties in making and using visual aids. For example, lack of materials, lack of time, being reluctant, etc were seen as factors that contributed a lot for the ineffective use of visual aids to teach vocabulary.

### 5. Effectiveness of Audio-visual aid in vocabulary learning



**Table 5 Effectiveness of Audio-visual aid in vocabulary learning**



Teaching aids inspire the learners and help the teachers to explain the concepts easily. Audio visual aids are those instructional aids which are used in the classroom to encourage teaching learning process. In the above table 5 the finding indicated that, 65 % of the respondents replied that visual aids are very effective, encourage and motivate students to understand the vocabulary through audio-visual aids. 35 % assured that to a certain extent AV's give confidence to the students in deducing the meanings of a new word. The findings of the interview from both teachers and students indicated that the participants agreed on the significance of visual aids in motivating students to deduce the meanings of a new word and enhance the vocabulary. Gordon also argued that: Various combinations of text, pictures, and sounds offered by an assortment of technology can be used to improve receptive language skills, inspire classroom discussions, elicit target language from individual students, and stimulate different learning styles while engaging the learners. (180).

The classroom observation showed that the teachers hardly discussed the visuals that were presented in the text. Visual materials assist teachers by giving them time for necessary classroom activities like drills, exercises, instructions and explanation for which their personal influence is indispensable. To enrich our vocabulary knowledge visual materials play a great role and prevent our isolation from the world of scientific and technical knowledge that can be gained by using English as a means of communication in real-life situations.

Even ahead of reading passages, pictures are included in the textbook. This might help students to brainstorm the general theme of the text. Before directly moving to read the passage, students should look at the visual aids given ahead of the passage. This may activate their background knowledge about the reading text. Doing this may help students to guess the meanings of key-words included in the reading text. In short, if English teachers are giving emphasis for visual aids (pictures, charts, diagrams, etc.), they may help their students to guess and catch-up the meanings of a new word. Calder (1966), cited in Girma (1983), states that psychologists have found that 84% of what we learn we get from seeing; 13% of what we learn we get from hearing; and only 3% we learn in other ways. This implies that most of what we learn we get through visual medium. More meaningful and problem solving tasks of vocabulary require learners to analyze and process language more deeply, through the use of visual materials which help them to commit information to long-term memory.

### Conclusion and recommendation

In this paper, English teachers believed that using audio-visual aids can be significant and a very good resource for teaching vocabulary. It is always helpful to show the objects to the students with the words so that they can have a better understanding of the objects and their meanings. It helps the students to recall the words easily. If the learners only hear a new word orally, they may not remember it. However, if the vocabularies are presented with the pictures, it becomes more effective.

Moreover, visual aids help the teacher to give emphasis on what is being taught and presented. Clear visual aids multiply the learners' ability of comprehension. Though, they could not exactly put their views into practice. As Audio-Visual aids are not feasible, convenient to teach vocabulary at primary, secondary and tertiary levels because of many such issues and challenges that English teachers faced were their own incompetency, Lack of materials, Lack of training, Lack of motivation and incentives and above all the time period allotted in the classroom. Allen, Kate & Marquez (2011), rightly said "Visual aids impact and add interest to a presentation. They can create excitement. Visual aids enable students to use more than one sense at the same time. One picture can elicit unlimited words".

According to the findings there are some factors to be considered to use audio visual aids in classroom. If the aids are not selected wisely, the purpose cannot be fulfilled. Sometimes, the language level of the audio or video cannot be suitable for the learners. As a result, the aids are not understandable for them which may make the anxiety level of the learners high. Moreover, sometimes, it becomes very difficult to find the audio materials for any level learners. If the audio-visual aids are not related to the contents, they may mislead and make learners confused. That is why teachers need to be careful while selecting the audio-visual aids for their learners.

To be effective in the teaching-learning process, teachers should use different visual aids because current thinking and practice in education highly advocates the need to actively involve the learners in their learning. Teachers' awareness towards usage of audio-visual aids should be restructured. All respondents mentioned that teachers' knowledge towards usage of audio-visual aids should be enhanced. Workshops and training or seminars should be frequently organized and teachers be motivated so that they can adopt a positive attitude towards the use of visual aids in their classrooms.

Therefore the findings of this study are not only useful for English teachers teaching in the schools, but also to the lecturers with related field, especially those who are teaching trainee teachers and students of English course in the colleges, universities and other educational institutes. The findings may be served as guidelines for teachers when implementing audio-visual aids in teaching, as they want their students to fully grasp the lessons. Thus, the use of this kind of materials in foreign language teaching/learning is a good way, to develop English

vocabulary and the students also will be able to develop their receptive as well as productive skills.

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